

SGT. KYLE WHITE-HALL OF HEROES INDUCTION CEREMONY

CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY GEN. RAYMOND T. ODIERNO

Good Morning everybody. It's my distinct privilege for me to be here today as we honor Sgt. Kyle White, who today joins a rare fraternity of military service members who have displayed extraordinary acts of valor during exceptional circumstances with great risk to their own personal safety.

Sgt. White embodies the essence of a Soldier and represents what every man and woman who dons this uniform strives to be ... an individual who has earned all the trust of all with whom he associates; one who possesses humility and selflessness that we all respect; one who embraces esprit de corps and routinely demonstrates a dedication to his profession that epitomizes the ethos of the American Soldier. In the face of imminent danger, he never quit. He always put his mission first. He never accepted defeat. Above all else, he never left his fallen comrades. Just as he was there for them that day, his bands of brothers are here for him today.

But we are also reminded today of the sacrifice that was made on Nov. 9, 2007, when six service members made the ultimate sacrifice, and their presence is felt in all of us as we honor Sgt. White. We remember:

- Cpt. Matthew C. Ferrara
- Sgt. Phillip A. Bocks, USMC
- Sgt. Jeffery S. Mersman
- Cpl. Lester G. Roque
- Cpl. Sean K. Langevin
- Spc. Joseph M. Lancour

We are honored to have some of their family members with us today. I would like to ask them to please stand and be recognized.

We also have with us today:

- Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work
- Under Secretary of the Army Brad Carson
- Sergeant Major of the Army Ray Chandler
- General John M. Paxton, Jr., Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps

Other distinguished guests from our Department of Defense and Army leadership that are joining us, Sergeant Major Battaglia, senior enlisted advisor to the chairman, and all other leaders here today, we're honored to have you here for this great ceremony.

I'd like to extend a special welcome to Sgt. White's family and friends: his father, Curt; his Mother, Cheryl; his grandfather, Bruce Funk; and his girlfriend Ms. Helen Ball. Thank you all for being here today.

I'd like to recognize Spc. Kain Schilling, who was there that day with Sgt. White. Kain, if you could please stand. I want to welcome all of Sgt. White's former unit members who are with us. Your presence reinforces the personal nature of combat and the strong bonds of friendship formed under extraordinary conditions. I'd like you all to please stand and be recognized as well. Thanks also to the current command teams from the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, "Sky Soldiers," and from the 2-503rd Infantry Regiment for being here today.

When in combat, you never know what each day might bring. All you know is you must always be mentally and physically prepared. But as we all know there are certain days that are very different from others. That day for Sgt. White and his platoon was Nov. 9, 2007.

Sgt. White and Spc. Schilling were members of Chosen Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade. They were headquartered with members of their platoon and with soldiers of the Afghan National Army at Combat Outpost Bella. The night prior, 14 Americans—paratroopers from 2-503rd and one Marine, Sgt. Bocks—and a squad of Afghan National Army soldiers bunked in a schoolhouse in preparation for a Shura meeting with village elders at a nearby Mosque. Villagers delayed the meeting for several hours before beginning mid-afternoon, at around 13:30.

Not long after the meeting began, Sgt. Bocks let his leadership know that the interpreter was hearing radio chatter in a language he did not understand. This cued the platoon leader, then-Lt. Ferrara, to direct his element to return to the outpost.

During their Exfil, the unit was ambushed, coming under fire from a significant number of enemy positions.

Sgt. White along with his platoon immediately returned fire, emptying their magazine in the direction of enemy targets. He was knocked unconscious, suffering a concussion, when an enemy rocket-propelled grenade detonated near him. As he came to, a fragmented round sent shrapnel into his face. Even under such chaotic conditions, Sgt. White gathered himself and assessed the situation, noting that he, Spc. Schilling, Lt. Ferrara, Sgt. Bocks, and the interpreter were cut off from the rest of their patrol, whose members had been forced down a cliff. He saw that Spc. Schilling had been shot in the arm, so he quickly applied a tourniquet to stop the bleeding, and then found concealment for them underneath a lone tree.

In the fury of the attack, Sgt. White took charge. After tending to Spc. Schilling, he noticed that Sgt. Bocks was badly injured and lying in the open.

Under continuous fire, Sgt. White sprinted back and forth four times to the Marine, diverting fire from him while moving him to a more protected location. Sgt. White then applied a tourniquet to Sgt. Bocks' leg but unfortunately, he succumbed to his wounds.

Returning to Spc. Schilling, Sgt. White saw that he had been hit again, this time in the leg. Sgt. White pulled off the belt from his own pants to form a tourniquet, tying it around Spc. Schilling's leg to stop the bleeding. Sgt. White next saw his platoon leader, Lt. Matthew

Ferrarra, lying still, face down. He again exposed himself to fire, crawling to Lt. Ferrarra, who had perished from his wounds. Sgt. White then crawled back under fire to Spc. Schilling.

Sgt. White realized that he needed to communicate with friendly elements, but both his and Spc. Schilling's radios had been damaged, with Spc. Schilling's hand-mic getting blown out of Sgt. White's hand by an enemy round.

Once again, he subjected himself to hostile fire, this time to get Sgt. Bocks' radio. Sgt. White was then able to relay key information, enabling his company and battalion to bring in mortars, artillery, air strikes, and helicopter gun ships, which prevented the enemy from massing on friendly positions. Sgt. White also directed the interpreter to relay commands to the ANA, and he set them into a security perimeter.

The fight continued, with Sgt. White suffering another concussion as a friendly mortar round exploded near him. Reeling from multiple head injuries, he willed himself to stay awake, calling in a MedEvac to evacuate both Spc. Schilling and injured ANA soldiers. Sgt. White marked the landing zone and assisted the medic in hoisting up the wounded Soldiers, refusing to be evacuated until all of the wounded were out of the ambush site.

Today as we induct Sgt. White into the famed Hall of Heroes, he joins the rare fraternity of military service members in the Medal of Honor Society.

All of them have demonstrated uncommon valor and extraordinary courage under fire. Sgt. White's humility, honor, leadership, integrity, personal courage, and selfless service represent what is best about our Soldiers and our Army.

Sgt. White's concern for his fellow Soldiers, his conspicuous gallantry, and his intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty make him a national hero with a lasting legacy. Today, we honor Sgt. White - a man of conviction and of courage. And by honoring him, we honor those heroes who fought so selflessly by his side, and all of our Soldiers who have raised their right hand to defend this country and defend our ideals. The bonds formed in combat between our brothers and sisters are everlasting and difficult to describe to someone else who has never experienced it. But it is the inspiration that drives ordinary Soldiers to be extraordinary. Today we recognize an extraordinary Soldier, Sgt. Kyle White.

The strength of our Nation is our Army
The strength of our Army is our Soldiers
The strength of our Soldiers is our Families
And that is what makes us Army Strong!

Thank you very much.